



A humvee from the 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry Regiment, encounters a simulated car bomb during a convoy live-fire exercise at Peason Ridge, north of Fort Polk, Louisiana. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood)

The Simulation Operations Officer in a Sustainment Brigade

An FA57 simulation operations officer can significantly benefit a sustainment brigade that is preparing to deploy.

■ By Lt. Col. Carlos J. Kavetsky

After graduating from the Simulation Operations Course in 2012, I served as the simulations operations officer for the 3rd Sustainment Brigade. I deployed with the 3rd Sustainment Brigade to Afghanistan in 2013 and helped prepare the brigade for its deployments to Operation Spartan Shield and Operation Inherent Resolve in Kuwait.

I want to share with the simula-

tions and sustainment communities my experience as a functional area 57 (FA57) simulation operations officer supporting multifunctional logisticians.

Specifically, I want to assist FA57s who will be assigned to sustainment brigades in the future and to describe the training exercises and road to war (RTW) that certified the 3rd Sustainment Brigade for the two deployments.

Modeling and Simulations

While I was assigned to the 3rd Sustainment Brigade, I worked under two different brigade commanders. I spent most of my time helping them achieve their brigade RTW training objectives using constructive simulations and knowledge management (KM).

A primary difficulty units may face is how to effectively train a “hyper-modular” formation. Sustainment

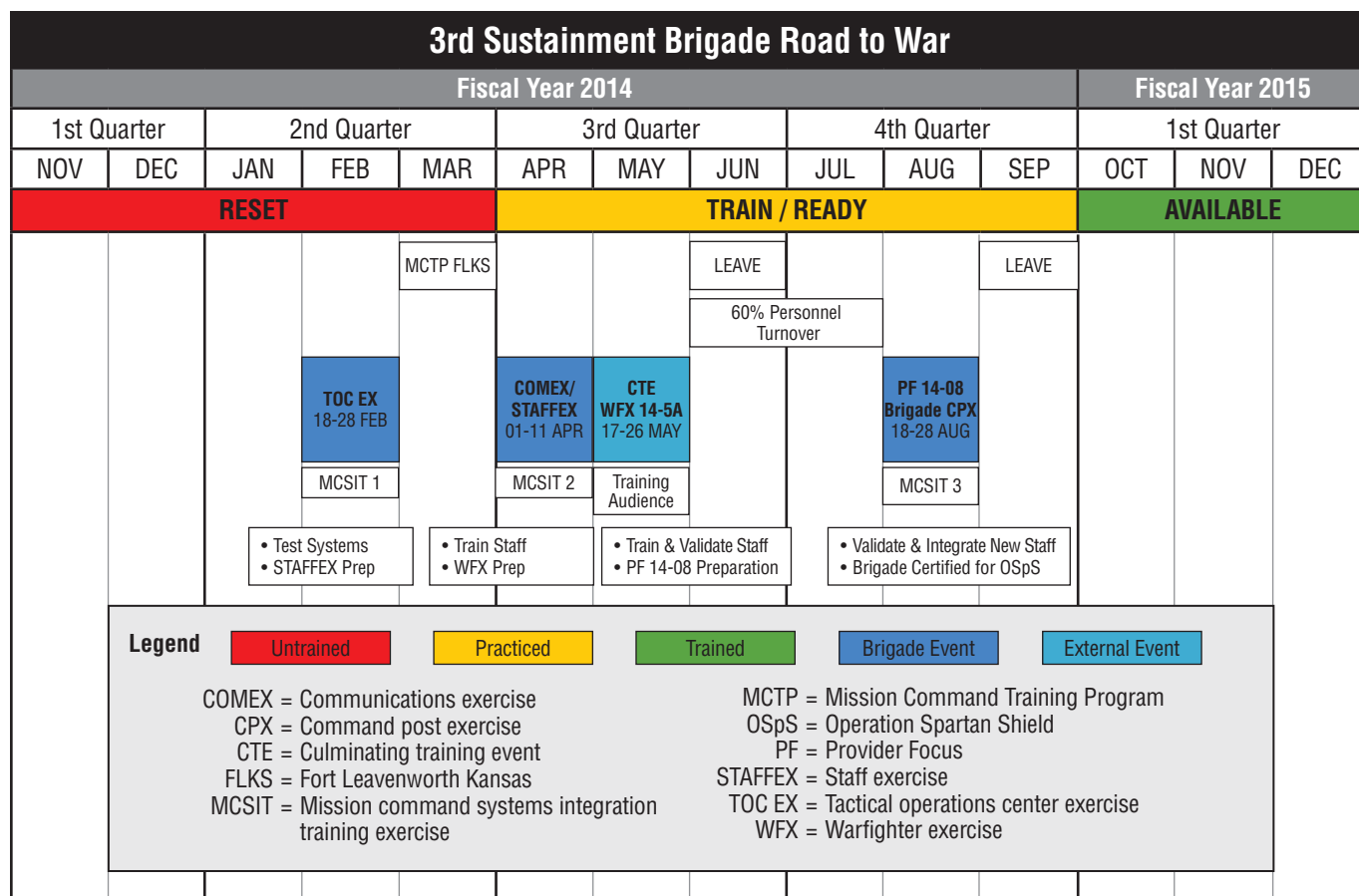


Figure 1. The FA57 officer implemented a three-phased training plan to prepare the 3rd Sustainment Brigade for deployment.

brigades do not follow a traditional Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) cycle or deploy as a brigade. From 2012 to 2014, the 3rd Sustainment Brigade had all of its subordinate units in different pools of the ARFORGEN cycle. No more than two company-sized elements were in the same brigade ARFORGEN cycle.

The first challenge this situation causes is that when the FA57 and staff plan a brigade-level mission command systems integration training exercise (MCSIT), staff exercise, or command post exercise, the special troops battalion or combat sustainment support battalion will not necessarily be integrated simultaneously into the training strategy. The staff will have to find opportunities to train each unit separately or even integrate other units that will be assigned to the brigade during deployments.

The second challenge is time management and how to plan a MCSIT in a compressed, nontraditional ARFORGEN model. Therefore, the FA57 and the staff need to understand the ARFORGEN model, emerging readiness models, and division training guidance to include a MCSIT in the brigade's RTW.

Mission Command Integration

Commanders and their staffs must understand what FA57s and simulation operations can do for their units to enable mission success. In my case, my brigade commanders empowered me to exercise my duties and responsibilities. The true game changer was that both commanders possessed joint exercise planning backgrounds and had a broad understanding of FA57 capabilities, which they leveraged to prepare the brigade for sustainment operations in Afghanistan and Kuwait.

If commanders and S-3s do not understand FA57 capabilities and the power of simulation operations, FA57s will have to build trust through education and by marketing their capabilities to unit leaders. FA57s can use an "elevator pitch," or a concise briefing, to educate leaders, raise awareness, and generate requests for assistance with training.

I recommend that FA57s conduct "battlefield circulation." FA57s should visit subordinate unit commanders and staffs and ask how they can help them. By doing so, the FA57 will discover the commander's needs, be able to provide solutions, and build trust.

The MCSIT

Both of my commanders had a broad understanding of the MCSIT model, which we integrated into the brigade RTW. The FA57 can plan a MCSIT to train the brigade. (See

figure 1.) Regardless of the deployment time line or availability of a combat training center (CTC) rotation, when combined with constructive simulations integration, the MCSIT works for sustainment brigades and, in my opinion, is the solution to the modularity gap created by the brigade combat team-centric ARFORGEN model.

A sustainment brigade conducting a MCSIT—prescribed on its RTW and supported by its local mission training complex (MTC) and mission command training program (MCTP)—can validate itself for deployment without having a CTC rotation. A MCSIT is not the optimal venue to validate sustainment brigades, but it is a way, and it worked in our case.

The 3rd Sustainment Brigade deployed twice in the past three years without participating in any CTC rotations. Although the brigade participated in one Unified Endeavor mission and two warfighter exercises (WFXs), they occurred too early in the ARFORGEN cycle and subsequent personnel turnovers caused a loss of momentum. Therefore, the gap solution is the MCSIT combined with constructive simulations.

Mission Command Systems

One integration challenge during MCSIT execution was training a new and immature brigade staff on mission command systems. The Fort Stewart, Georgia, MTC was instrumental in providing mission command systems (the Mission Command Workstation and Battle Command Sustainment Support System) functional area training.

The FA57's mission command systems training plan will facilitate staff integration training and enable the staff to understand how to leverage and collaborate through the Mission Command Workstation common operational picture.

Outside Support

FA57s should know, understand, influence, and build rapport beyond

their organizations to leverage partners in support of the commander's intent. The Fort Stewart MTC and the MCTP from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, were instrumental in training the brigade. The MTC provided the support, facilities, equipment, and expertise for every exercise. The MCTP trained the brigade during WFX 14-5A and one of our MCSIT events.

FA57s' expertise makes them ideally suited to serve as brigade liaisons with the MTC and MCTP for technical, mission command, and operational concepts and details. This relationship builds on a common understanding and fosters coordination and cooperation with partners, which is essential in planning and executing MCSIT events.

Leadership Styles

I worked for two extremely intelligent and competent commanders who possessed different leadership styles. Both commanders were directly involved throughout the planning of the MCSIT events, but at different stages. They placed direct emphasis on the importance of their intent and scenario as the vehicles to prepare the brigade for combat.

My first commander expected his intent to be followed and conveyed very specific guidance. He was very engaged in all stages of the planning and execution process, allowing room for ideas and mistakes and focusing the brigade on a specific end state.

However, my second commander also expected his intent to be followed but was less specific with his guidance, allowing me ample room to develop ideas and make mistakes. He was heavily engaged in the initial stages of the design and planning process but was less engaged in the final stages, letting his deputy and staff prepare for the exercise.

What allowed such flexibility was that the former commander and staff built and resourced the Kuwait RTW while in Afghanistan, providing a more predictable RTW. This gave the new commander and staff

more flexibility to shape the exercises to attain the desired effects and end state.

Nevertheless, both commanders' focus was preparing the brigade for combat, and they let me direct and orchestrate every exercise with the MTC and MCTP in support of our operations. Therefore, the FA57 needs to be flexible and adapt to different leadership styles to be effective.

Assimilating to the Culture

An FA57 should understand, learn, and assimilate to the organization's culture. In my case, I became a multifunctional logistician. The sustainment brigade's complexity forced me out of my comfort zone. A new FA57 will bring a broad range of experiences from his basic branch but may lack significant sustainment knowledge and experience.

The FA57 will have to take the initiative, learn the history and culture of the brigade and its capabilities, and network with the brigade subject matter experts. The FA57 should review doctrine, including Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 4-0, Sustainment, ADP 5-0, The Operations Process, and ADP 6-0, Mission Command. The FA57 can also use the Army Training Network (<https://atn.army.mil/>) as a source for training tools.

These resources will enable the FA57 to quickly learn about sustainment operations, which will be essential for the design, scenario, and database development of command post exercises, staff exercises, or MCSITs. Finally, the FA57 should always have a senior logistician (noncommissioned or warrant officer) to assist during scenario development and help orchestrate exercise execution.

Knowledge Management

As a primary trainer for all MCSIT events, the FA57 will have to find targeted opportunities to facilitate the flow of knowledge and enhance shared understanding. I chose to do this for every exercise, given our

time constraints, especially during WFX 14–5A.

Acting as the brigade KM officer and mission command trusted agent with the MCTP, I developed a KM strategy that enabled the brigade to become a learning organization that could effectively and efficiently capture and disseminate brigade lessons learned and incorporate them into our KM system.

We phased the strategy based on the five steps of the KM process: assess, design, develop, pilot, and implement. KM was critical for capturing tacit and explicit knowledge for new staff members and the rear detachment during the summer turnover of brigade personnel.

Leveraging Experience

FA57s should leverage their experience to become relevant to their organizations. During my deployment to Afghanistan, I did not execute duties as the battle command officer or KM officer. I acted as the fusion cell officer-in-charge and was responsible for advising and assisting the brigade commander by developing, synchronizing, integrating, distributing, and strategically communicating key elements of his vision, goals, mission, and intent.

I was also responsible for plans and future operations. Although this was outside of my trained core competencies, it was not foreign to my background and past experiences.

The brigade's mission in Afghanistan was mission command of sustainment operations and redeployment, retrograde, and materiel reduction support for all U.S. and coalition forces operating in Regional Commands South and Southwest and National Support Element West.

The brigade was also responsible for providing security escort augmentation for commercially contracted sustainment convoys. This mission was very complex and required precise planning horizons. Therefore, the commander's intent for the fusion cell was to allow the brigade tactical operations center to

focus on the current fight while the fusion cell bridged current and future operations and plans.

To accomplish this, the brigade commander provided me with a team of four smart officers to manage assessments, special projects, initiatives, and plans. As the fusion cell officer-in-charge, I produced the brigade's RTW for the follow-on deployment to Kuwait three months before redeploying from Operation Enduring Freedom.

Our team framed the RTW within the ARFORGEN and MCSIT model. We also produced our Operation Enduring Freedom sustainment mission observations, insights, and lessons for the Combined Arms Support Command Reverse Collection and Analysis Team.

Provider Focus 14–08

Provider Focus 14–08 was the final MCSIT event on our RTW before the second deployment to Kuwait. Its purpose was to prepare a new staff to conduct operations in support of unified land operations. The brigade's mission was to provide mission command of sustainment operations throughout the Central Command Joint Support Area Georgia.

The brigade had a new mission and capabilities and was responsible for distribution operations not only by land and air but also by sea. We owned two logistics support vessels and two landing craft utility vessels, and we managed a significant contracting mission across the combined joint operations area.

With only two months to design and plan this exercise, we retrieved the 108th Sustainment Brigade culminating training event simulation and master scenario events list database from the Fort Hood, Texas, MTC to reduce the planning effort. It was designed to be a two-week mission command exercise, and we invited the 1st Theater Sustainment Command to participate as the higher command.

The commander decided to use the first week of the exercise as a venue

to “live a week in the life of the 108th Sustainment Brigade” by conducting a virtual left-seat and right-seat hand over. We integrated the brigade staff into select 108th Sustainment Brigade battle rhythm events through video teleconferences and secure voice over Internet Protocol.

The brigade staff used tools that were available to garner current products and information to use during a three-day simulation exercise the following week. This exercise was 80 percent a learning and KM event and 20 percent a simulation exercise.

FA57 core competencies (simulation supported training, battle command systems integration, and operational KM) range across all six warfighting functions. Brigade capabilities do not anchor FA57s because FA57s are multidiscipline and not specific to any unit. They are master trainers and command and staff enablers within their core competencies.

Therefore, a sustainment brigade FA57 should ensure the commander and staff understand what FA57s and simulation operations can do for the unit. The FA57 should understand the commander's intent, the ARFORGEN model, emerging readiness models, and training doctrine. FA57s should adapt to different leadership styles, leverage their experiences, and stay relevant. They should understand, learn, and assimilate to their organization's culture and build rapport outside of their own organizations.

Lt. Col. Carlos J. Kavetsky is the chief of knowledge management in the Task Force Marne Headquarters, 3rd Infantry Division, at Fort Stewart, Georgia. He has bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Puerto Rico and a master's degree in international relations from Webster University. He is a graduate of the Army Simulation Operations and Knowledge Management Courses.